



PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
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WINTER MOTH CONTROL MEASURES UNDERWAY IN MASSACHUSETTS *Parasitic Fly Release Planned in the Town of Wenham*

A team of scientists will release several hundred parasitic flies on Monday May 15 in the Town of Wenham at the Town-owned land known as the Iron Rail Property. The release will take place rain or shine at 1:30 pm. This is the second release of this parasite in Massachusetts but the first on the North Shore in an effort to broaden the biological control of the winter moth, a new invasive species in eastern Massachusetts that caused the defoliation of approximately 34,000 acres last year.

The release effort in Wenham is being led jointly by Dr. Joseph Elkinton, Professor of Entomology at the University of Massachusetts and Forest Health Program staff at the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Last year, the initial release of approximately 300 parasitic flies took place at Wompatuck State Park in Hingham. Diversifying the location of the release of the flies is expected to help the parasites to become established in a wider area in order to more quickly combat the infestation of winter months.

Winter moth caterpillars are responsible for the stripping of foliage from many kinds of deciduous trees in towns from the North Shore to Cape Cod. The parasitic fly, known as *Cyzenis Albicans*, is an important natural enemy of the winter moth, and has been shown to be an effective weapon against invasions throughout the world, including Nova Scotia, where the fly was introduced in the 1950s. Winter moths have been at low levels there ever since. Both the winter moth and the parasitic fly are originally from Europe.

Cyzenis Albicans flies are an effective measure for controlling winter moth caterpillars as they produce eggs that are eventually toxic when consumed by the caterpillars. The fly lays its eggs on foliage eaten by winter moth caterpillars, the caterpillars consume the foliage and eggs, and the eggs hatch inside the caterpillar where they develop into a larval fly. Winter moth pupae containing the larval fly eventually die and an adult fly emerges from the pupae the following spring to attack more winter moth caterpillars.

The parasitic fly release has been reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources in conjunction with U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Massachusetts Environmental Protection Agency, and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

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The release project represents a cooperative effort between the University of Massachusetts, the USDA Forest Service, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Plymouth County Cooperative Extension.

“It will take a few years for these several hundred flies to catch up with the trillions of winter moths here in eastern Massachusetts, but we have every reason to believe they will be effective,” said Dr. Elkinton.

Research has shown that the fly attacks only the winter moth and will not be harmful to other species of caterpillars. The flies to be released at 1:30 pm on May 15 were collected by scientists with the Canadian Forestry Service in Victoria, British Columbia. They were shipped to the USDA quarantine facility at Otis Air Base on Cape Cod.

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has developed a *Winter Moth Fact Sheet* posted on DCR’s website at http://www.mass.gov/dcr/news/winter_moth.pdf. Copies can also be requested by calling the DCR Boston Office at 617-626-1250 or sending an email to MassParks@state.ma.us (subject line: “winter moth fact sheet”). For additional information about the winter moth, contact the DCR Forest Health Program in Amherst at 413-256-1601.

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